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Morals and venereal diseases

New York

1916

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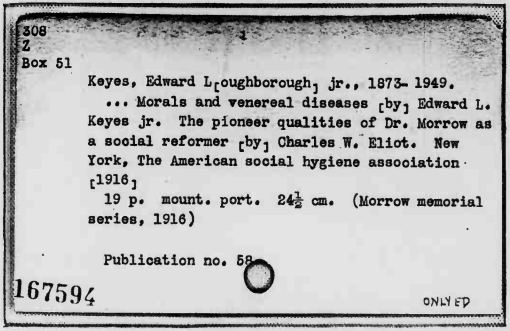

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Morals and Venereal Disease

EDWARD L. KEYES, JR.

Morals and Venereal Disease

Prince A. Morrow

MORROW
MEMORIAL SERIES
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The Pioneer Qualities of Dr. Morrow as a Social Reformer

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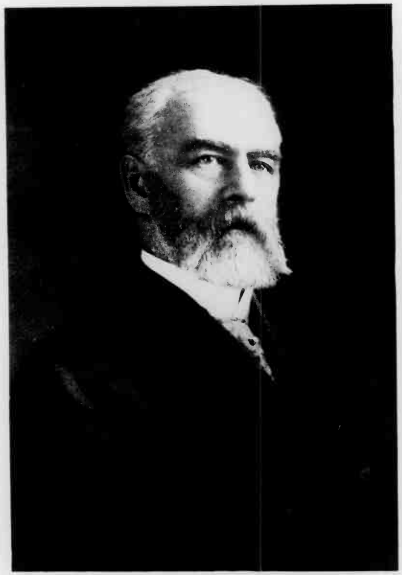

Prince A. Morrow

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Dr. Prince Albert Morrow died in his sixty-seventh year, March 17, 1913, after a life of service to science, medicine, and social progress. As founder of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis and first president of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, Dr. Morrow was among the great pioneers of the social hygiene movement.

Of the origin of this movement in America, he wrote: "An international congress for the study and prevention of the diseases growing out of the social evil, in which every civilized country in the world was represented, was held in Brussels in 1902. The deliberations of this congress crystalized into a conviction that the preventive measures hitherto employed were insufficient, and that the whole question should be studied from a broader standpoint, and with special reference to the social conditions involved in the causation of these diseases. Especial recognition was given to the fact that moral as well as medical issues were involved in the problem of prevention, and the congress recommended that societies should be organized in all countries for the study of the best means of every order, moral, social, legislative, as well as medical, to be employed in the prophylaxis of these diseases."

On his return from the Brussels Congress, to which he was a delegate from the United States, Dr. Morrow set himself to the difficult task of promoting such societies as had been advocated, and gave the greater part of his time during his remaining years to writing, lectures, correspondence, and conferences toward this end. Recognition of these efforts was voiced by the resolution presented by Professor William H. Welch, of Johns Hopkins University, and adopted at the Fifteenth International Congress on Hygiene and Demography in Washington, 1912: "*Whereas*, Both nations abroad and the American citizens at home recognize and pay tribute to the splendid devotion and services rendered by Dr. Prince A. Morrow in the difficult pioneer work of preparing the people for a knowledge that will enable them to safeguard their homes against the influences hitherto unrecognized, misunderstood, or deliberately ignored; *Be It Resolved*: That the participants * * * consider it a privilege to make public record of their sense of obligation to Dr. Morrow for his courageous and unflinching attitude in the face of difficulties that would have discomfited an ordinary man, and of admiration for the achievement that has culminated in the prominent position

that education in sex hygiene has commanded in the deliberations of this Congress."

Dangers to the innocent members of society Dr. Morrow held to be the chief impelling motive in the social hygiene movement. "Social laws," he said, "which, though unwritten, are more rigorously enforced than any laws upon the statute books, should not freely absolve the male offender against morality while condemning to social infamy the female offender. * * * Practically it seldom happens that a man is profligate in his youth without consequences. Irrespective of the effect upon his character, immorality breeds disease and thus carries its own punishment with it. Unfortunately, the punishment for the fault is not confined to the chief actor in it. The debt contracted to diseases by a man in his bachelor days often has to be paid in his married life. Into the vicious circle created by vice, innocent wives and children are drawn and must share the punishment."

Thus did Dr. Morrow seek to combine the moral and medical issues of the great problem of repressing prostitution and reducing venereal infections. It has been said of him, "By pen and speech, he preached the gospel of clean living and sought to bring together persons differing in race and creed but united in the desire to spread that gospel." "He boldly attacked the double standard of sexual morality by showing the fallacy of the old-fashioned belief as to the universal existence of a sexual necessity in the male." "He combated the value of a rigid maintenance of the professional secret by focusing attention upon the responsibility of the profession in countenancing the marriage of individuals suffering from uncured venereal disease." "He strove for years to secure better dispensary accommodations for those, especially the poor and innocent, suffering from the maladies as to which he was an authority, and to beat down the prejudice that excluded from general hospitals such cases in their early stages, when susceptible of effective treatment, while admitting their sequelae under politer names."

Among the greatest things he did were "To arouse a sense of moral responsibility with regard to sex ignorance and sex disease among physicians themselves," and to encourage "The taking off of the smoked glasses through which alone in former days the public was willing to contemplate social diseases and moral questions." Thus has it become noticeable that "Within a few years there has been a great awakening of the public interest and the public conscience with regard to the matters concerned in this movement. Topics that heretofore had been treated as

something to be mentioned only *sub rosa*, notwithstanding their vital importance to the well-being of society, have come to be discussed as never before—in large assemblies, in periodicals, in the daily press, in current literature, and latterly even on the stage. The light has been turned on. For the betterment of the ills of humanity, the most potent force is enlightenment. It is the stream of truth that has now begun its purging flow through the Augean stables of vice, and in all this great movement the prime mover and master workman was Dr. Prince A. Morrow."

It is well for those who have taken up this work to remember how clearly this man and his fellow pioneers saw the task for which they could but lay the foundation. As a memorial to Dr. Morrow, the American Social Hygiene Association has received a sum of money as a permanent fund which it is hoped will be rapidly increased so that the income from it may provide for new pioneer work which needs to be done. The generous giver [1] of the first three thousand dollars to this fund made no stipulations regarding the expenditure of the income from it, but the directors of the Association believe that one of the useful purposes to which it may wisely be applied is the publication of notable manuscripts presented to the Association emphasizing the moral and spiritual phases of the social hygiene movement.

The address of Dr. Edward L. Keyes, Jr., "Morals and Venereal Disease," has been selected as the first of the series thus to be published. Dr. Keyes is professor of urology in the Cornell University Medical School, chief surgeon of the genito-urinary division of Bellevue Hospital, New York City, and President of the American Urological Association. He succeeded Dr. Morrow as president of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, now the New York Social Hygiene Society, and is a director and member of the executive committee of the American Social Hygiene Association. Thus his words carry exceptional weight both because of his scientific and medical knowledge and of his intimate connection with the social hygiene movement.

[1] By express direction of the donor, this gift has been officially recorded as anonymous.

Morals and Venereal Disease

Edward L. Keyes, Jr., M. D., Ph.D.

The campaign against venereal disease is becoming more and more complex. Ten years ago it consisted of little more than the work of the social hygiene societies that then began to spring up about the country; addresses, pamphlets, and, later, lectures, defining the venereal peril, especially in its relation to the innocent, and providing data whereby parents and other persons in authority over the young might understand and combat the danger.

From such small and specialized beginnings the good news has spread until today there is not a social or religious organization in the country that has not at least taken cognizance of it. The medical societies have discussed it ardently. The clergy have awakened to the gravity of the situation. Our legislatures have listened to the voice of the people, and in some states have attempted to legislate disease out of matrimony and prostitution out of politics. The police are enforcing abatement and vagrancy laws as well as may be. The army and navy are experimenting with personal prophylaxis. The hospitals are opening their wards to venereal disease. The health boards, by means of diagnostic and advisory clinics, are fighting the quack and counselling the diseased.

Thus the topic of venereal disease has been brought to the notice of the American public. The immediate results have, of course, been freakish. We have already seen the failure of the attempt at teaching sex hygiene in the public schools to children who knew nothing of the subject by teachers who seemingly had not even the wit to guess what the children did know. Now the wise plan is being tried of teaching the teachers, in order that they may at least understand the situation. We have seen college men suffer the successive phases of what Dr. Exner appropriately terms "pathologic emphasis" which "wholly failed to lift

the subject out of the prevailing atmosphere of vulgarity;" "physiologic emphasis" which "sought to interpret the sex life in its relation to developing manhood" and "emphasized too exclusively the physical aspects of the question;" and "idealistic emphasis" of which Dr. Exner says, "The students were hungry for this kind of teaching and their splendid response to it shows that every student is an idealist."

And so is every adult an idealist—whether he will or no. We can never cease to be sufficiently grateful for the prudence with which Dr. Morrow directed our first venture on this perilous crusade. He eluded the materialistic advocates of personal prophylaxis and contraception, and though an immediate outcry arose in favor of reglementation of prostitution, he stoutly withstood this, too. So ample is the present justification of his attitude at that time that it is hard to realize now how overwhelmingly in favor of reglementation the enlightened members of society then were.

But though we are all idealists at bottom, our idealism speaks in more dialects than do the Balkan States. Here on the one hand are Professor Münsterberg and Agnes Repplier crying out against the repeal of reticence, proclaiming that to drag sex into the light of day is but to focus the lewdness of youth upon it. This reproof was indeed sharply merited by the lack of idealism in much of what used to pass for sex education. But we have learned to distinguish the child from the adult: the child who needs to be stimulated to idealism; the adult whose interest must often be aroused by shocking pathologic detail.

On the other hand, opposed to these conservatives are the hygienists, who have small patience with so slow, so indirect a campaign as that of sex education. To the complaint of the conservative their answer is, "But, my dear sir, listen: your perfect system of secrecy has left us with perhaps twenty per cent. of our young men syphilitic [1] among the less educated classes, and five per cent. of our college lads syphilitic *when they leave the high school.* It has added to the burdens of the nation twenty-five per cent. of its blind babies, and at least ten per cent.

[1] Such is the estimate of Captain Vedder (War Department, Surgeon General's Office, Bulletin No. 8, June, 1915).

of its insane. It has been a major element in founding the specialties of gynecology and urology in medicine and supports both in affluence. If reticence so mutilates the race, let reticence retire. If the moralist is so little protection, let him stand aside. Here is business for the health officer."

It is a pretty fight. Another generation will doubtless see the end of it. Meanwhile the followers of Dr. Morrow see in this problem morals as well as sanitation—and sanitation as well as morals. They concede it possible—at least theoretically possible—that the hygienist, unaided, might stamp out venereal disease; but they are convinced that, if he did, the problem as they see it would not be solved.

For in this campaign against venereal disease there is much more at stake than mere hygiene. However much venereal disease may afflict the ignorant and the innocent, it is ultimately dependent upon illicit sex relationship, and this upon unbridled passion. We grown-ups who preach the control of masculine passion and the need of a single Christian standard of sexual morality, are bereft neither of our own good health, nor mind, nor even memory. Our campaign for moral and sanitary prophylaxis began as a cry for sex hygiene; it has advanced to social hygiene. We transcend the campaign against venereal disease in our aspiration to purify by every means, moral, religious, hygienic, the morals of the race. We "hitch our wagon to a star," if you please. We boast as little hope of attaining our ideal as do the advocates of prison reform or universal peace. But we can bear the gibes of the cynic in the full consciousness that our ideals are essential to the progress of our race. We who are not without sin yet dare to cast the first stone. We dare hope that the sexual morals of the nineteenth century will some day seem as archaic as the political morals of the eighteenth or the penal code of the sixteenth.

Such ideals, it may be frankly confessed, make no such direct attack upon venereal disease as hygiene does. The first line of attack is indeed the health department; but we do not see any fulness in a campaign that is simply sanitary—a compound of Lord Chesterfield's Letters, health board registration, personal prophylaxis, and contraception. Against those who believe that

this is all it is perhaps a waste of time to argue. For what is lacking in the exclusively sanitary program is only a spiritual flavor, only the little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump, only the Christianity that blinks with astonishment at the pragmatic philosophy of Lord Chesterfield, gasps at the repeal of reticence implied by compulsory health board registration, and blushes at the mention of personal prophylaxis and contraception.

Sexual purity, founded upon the most spiritual ideals, appears to us of more importance to the welfare of the race than any amount of venereal disease. The very rarity of such purity in the ugly struggle of life makes it none the less precious. We can no more restrain a native admiration for the purity of age than we can resist the fascination of innocence in youth.

But our immediate topic is more precise than this. We are not asked to choose between morals and disease, but to debate whether the methods at present employed are of any value in the control of venereal disease. This practical topic has been judicially summarized in a recent publication.[2] The fact that I differ from some of its conclusions makes me the more willing to quote them, as follows:—

"I am far from any desire to minimize the importance of the effort to control syphilis [3] and the other venereal diseases by methods of social and moral prophylaxis. It would seem to be the bounden duty of right-minded parents to have their children properly informed about the obvious facts of sexual life and about the dangers of venereal diseases. There can be no doubt of the usefulness of the efforts to educate the adult public also with regard to the formidable dangers of syphilis and gonorrhea. It surely makes for the reduction of venereal diseases to inculcate the importance of high standards of morality and the hygienic value, to say nothing of other things, of clean living. It is the duty of society to protect its youth and its young manhood and womanhood, as far as possible, from the temptations that arise from improper suggestions and surroundings and associates.

"Last and most important of all, society should awaken to

[2] *Syphilis as a Modern Problem.* W. A. Pusey, M.D., American Medical Association, 1915.

[3] Though these observations concern syphilis only, they are equally applicable to all venereal disease. E. K.

the danger that arises from the later and later postponement of marriage, and should make some effort to modify the conditions of life which render it economically impossible for most young men and many young women to marry. It should recognize that the tendency to postpone marriage until well along in adult life is a direct play in favor of the venereal diseases.

"But all of these factors have to do only with the predisposing causes of syphilis. The actual cause of the prevalence of syphilis is the sexual appetite. The sexual appetite is a natural phenomenon; after hunger, it is the dominant influence of man in the whole conduct of his social relations. And from the biologic standpoint, no plan for the reduction or suppression of venereal diseases can appeal as practical which does not accept the fact that the sexual appetite, except within narrow limits, is beyond society's control. If syphilis is to be controlled, its control must come by treating it as a sanitary problem. Medicine can offer now practical measures which are effective for such control. This is the contribution which syphilology has to offer to the solution of the immensely important public problem of the checking of the venereal peril."

Here is an admirably rounded declaration marred by a central fallacy. The author gives due credit to the direct sanitary attack on venereal disease and also to the indirect moral attack. But he spoils all his concessions to morals by placing the sexual appetite, "except within narrow limits, beyond society's control."

How that phrase would delight a Chesterton! It is at once so obviously true and so palpably false. Let any one of us review his own life history. Most men can find events in their sexual past of which they have no cause to boast. And yet take any one of these events; consider its causes. These present a maze of heredity, circumstance, habit, ignorance, morals, religion, health, fastidiousness, vanity, desire, curiosity, and perhaps alcoholism and a hundred other influences. Under this aspect morality can indeed be expected to control youth's strongest passion only "within narrow limits."

But consider the cardinal acts of passion that contribute to the spread of venereal disease. Contemplate the alcoholism, the lack of moral training, the prevalent social cynicism that contrib-

ute so largely to that first act which begins a habit of sexual license. Weigh the ignorance that plays so large a part in our crowning shame, the introduction of venereal disease into matrimony. Balance against these the failure of the best-informed roué to protect himself against infection. Set the proven chastity of Catholic priesthood against the materialism of socialist and Nietschean philosophy; and we may fairly conclude that there are no known limits to the control of sexual passion.

With sufficient moral incentive any passion may be controlled. That the whole world's history is one of uncontrolled passion is no reason to despair. So is the whole world's history one of treachery and murder. We may well be dissatisfied with a past wherein moral influence and church dominion have fought alone against man's passion. We may well invoke every aid that hygiene can afford in the battle against venereal disease. We may well recognize that the ideal opportunity to control the sex passion is in early youth before the tiger that is in us has tasted blood. We may well hope that the combination of ancient ideals and modern methods shall result in a material reduction of the great Black Plague. But we must not permit ourselves to be discouraged into complacent contemplation of the "narrow limits" within which passion may be influenced. Until the freedom of medical students from infection bears witness to the contrary, we must grant to moral education the first place in the campaign against venereal disease. The bright light of our new and wonderful science of hygiene must not blind us to the fact that we are still human, that in youth at least the sexual appetite is indeed man's strongest passion, that this passion is indeed the essential cause of venereal disease, and that for the control of this passion we have but one weapon,—the education of the will, moral prophylaxis.

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THE PIONEER QUALITIES OF DR. MORROW AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

CHARLES WILLIAM ELIOT, LL.D.

President Emeritus of Harvard University

Honorary President of the American Social Hygiene Association

The previous speakers have known Dr. Morrow long and well; but I have known him only a few years. It was about four years ago that I first read his work on "Social Diseases and Marriage." Shortly after, I had opportunities of talking with him, and then I first received a strong impression of his high qualities as a pioneer in a very difficult work of social reform.

I knew from my own study of medical education, of the medical profession, and of the function of the physician in society that Dr. Morrow was attacking his own profession in a sensitive place, namely, on a question of professional ethics. I saw, too, that Dr. Morrow was inculcating moral lessons not wholly consistent with the teachings of the Hebraic-Christian religion in which all of us, he too, have been brought up. The Hebrew religion represents the reproductive process of the human species as a thing unclean. The Old Testament teaches that the woman who has brought forth a child must be purified by religious ceremonies, and the New Testament records that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had to be purified after the birth of Jesus by offering a sacrifice—"a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons"—in the Temple. Dr. Morrow taught, on the other hand, as Canon Lyttelton has done in his admirable book "Training of the Young in Laws of Sex," that the incessant renewal of human life on this earth with all its natural processes is a thing noble, sacred, and pure. In preaching this doctrine it was inevitable that Dr. Morrow should encounter a feeling of opposition on the part of excellent men and women whose early religious training had been of the usual sort. He publicly attacked social conditions with which our race for centuries has felt itself unable to deal, and therefore has been silent about. Dr. Morrow's preliminary teaching was that we must break this traditional policy of silence. Public opinion had enforced for generations a deliberate policy of saying nothing

about the sexual evils, or even the natural processes of reproduction. It had been the almost universal practice of fathers and mothers, physicians, and schools in all countries to withhold from children the information they seek naturally, inevitably, and innocently about birth and parenthood. Dr. Morrow was a pioneer in attacking this policy of silence.

He was moved to undertake this most difficult work by the sight of human suffering and misery in the practice of his professional specialty; but thousands of physicians for centuries past have seen the same things. Dr. Morrow saw, and resolved that he would combat this immense evil. He was a pioneer in the truest sense in a dangerous, difficult, social work. How reasonably and moderately he went about this difficult task! In the first conversation I had with him, I asked him how society could deal with the monstrous, brutal evil of prostitution, an evil from which no race of animals except the human race suffers. "Brutal" does not describe it; for it is morally lower than any practice of the brutes. I found that Dr. Morrow felt that this evil could not be successfully assaulted by mere force—that society might fail in assaulting it directly by force. I am inclined to believe that he afterward acquired a new hope in regard to a successful dealing with prostitution. He saw that, though prostitution cannot be completely suppressed, it can be greatly restricted by repressive laws and by alert and incorruptible officers of the law, and that repression would be a much safer policy than the prevalent toleration, with the sanction implied by public regulation.

We have lately had some admirable studies into the organized business of satisfying male lust; and out of these inquiries is shortly to come a method of dealing with that pernicious trade similar to the fairly successful method of dealing with the trade which caters to the alcoholic vice. The law and the police must attack the real sinners, the men, not the women, and the owners of the buildings or rooms leased for immoral purposes. We may all be glad to remember that Dr. Morrow lived to share this hope of reform which four years ago he did not feel.

Dr. Morrow pleaded from the start for adequate hospital and dispensary provisions in every city and large town for the treatment of the venereal diseases. He believed that it was more important to prevent or check the spread of these contagious diseases than of any other, because they pass down from generation to generation and afflict the innocent and the helpless. That was pioneering of the best sort; and we rejoice that he lived to see some good fruit of his teaching. Medical practice and hos-

pital practice have changed much in this respect since Dr. Morrow began to urge adequate public provision for the treatment of active venereal disease. Eight years ago most of the best hospitals refused patients suffering from such ailments. Now many cases of these diseases are admitted to those same hospitals for care and treatment. This is an immense change for the better. It is the only humane way and the only safe way. Why should persons suffering from venereal disease be free to move about in the crowds of city life, in public vehicles, places of amusement, public eating places, lodging houses, and hotels? Society has long since ceased to allow such freedom to persons suffering from diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, or smallpox. In teaching that the venereal diseases should be dealt with as are other contagious diseases, Dr. Morrow was again a pioneer.

Dr. Morrow taught from the beginning that the only way to cure the sexual evils thoroughly, the only way to dig them up by the roots, was to prescribe the same standard of morality for man as for woman; and in this respect he was also a pioneer. The Christian nations have not insisted on that doctrine or practiced it. They have insisted, as many other nations have done, on the chastity of women, but have never insisted on the chastity of men. Dr. Morrow here touched the very core and heart of the subject. There is no other way to make marriage, the family, and society pure. Men must be as chaste as women. Here we come to a part of this vast subject of social hygiene which must be worked on for generations before Dr. Morrow's vision of a pure society can be realized. It is the practice of society today to attack a fallen woman, and let the man who has pushed her down go free. That is the practice of all courts; and the courts express the real state of the law. Last summer I met in a distant American city an elective judge who had tried, during a term of office which proved to be short, the method of arresting the men who walked in the streets with public women, or were found with such women in brothels, hotels, or houses of assignation. The method was so effective that the judge encountered a strong blast of that perverse public opinion which holds that brothels, saloons, and gambling houses are essential to active business in a city or large town. I fear that Dr. Morrow was many, many years in advance of the sentiment on this subject of the mass of American voters, and therefore in advance of legislation and of legal administration; but Dr. Morrow's doctrine of the single standard of chastity touched the roots of this horrible evil; and I hope that the efforts of this Society and of the numerous kindred societies will be steadily directed toward

the realization of his doctrine. It is the man who is the source of prostitution, not the woman. It is the man that spreads venereal disease through the family. It is the man who must be purified and redeemed. I know no part of Dr. Morrow's teaching which is so convincing, so searching as this, or any part where he was so far in advance of the average sentiment of his own profession, of the legal profession, and of the average legislator.

To the support of this great moral cause some new forces have come into play within the short period since this Society was founded by Dr. Morrow. Only eight years have passed since then; but in those years the progress of medical discovery and the improvements in medical research have been so great that Dr. Morrow's teachings have received large reinforcements. We have now a trustworthy test for the presence of syphilis in any human body. We possess a so-called cure for syphilis, that is, a remedy and treatment which do great good in many cases, and apparently effect a cure in some cases of this, the most formidable of the venereal diseases. Think how much these new discoveries are going to strengthen Dr. Morrow's teaching! Shall we continue to deny to sufferers from venereal disease hospital and dispensary accommodations when we actually possess the means of treating these diseases successfully in many cases, though not in all? Shall we deny the hospital and the dispensary to these sufferers when we know that the majority of them can be greatly benefited? To be sure, we do not yet know how permanent the cures will prove to be. We must wait for that assurance; but now we unquestionably possess valuable means of treatment which did not exist when Dr. Morrow began his public work.

Several of the speakers tonight have mentioned the rapid way in which the teachings of Dr. Morrow have spread through the professions, including the teaching profession, and even into the legislatures. The progress has indeed been rapid, almost too rapid; for in the rush of hundreds of persons to contribute to this subject the discussions have sometimes been too free and exaggerated, and the new practices urged too radical and rash; but on the whole, is not this rapid spread of Dr. Morrow's missionary work encouraging and hopeful? Are we not glad that it has so spread?

All his work touched a subject in which the public in this country and in England, and indeed in all countries, is taking a strong interest. I refer to the subject of eugenics. Thoughtful people are all beginning to consider the welfare of our race not for today only, but for the future. We are beginning to imagine

and contrive how the future of the race may be made sounder, surer, and happier; and this interest in eugenics reinforces all of Dr. Morrow's teaching. We wish we could congratulate him on this access of multitudinous strength to his cause. What a worthy cause! What an inspiring life was Dr. Morrow's! Shall we not all resolve to do what in us lies to further his teachings and to get his social ideals realized?

An address at a meeting of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis in memory of Dr. Prince A. Morrow, New York City, May 22, 1913.
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WESTERN STATES DIVISION

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Purposes: The purposes of this Association shall be to acquire and diffuse knowledge of the established principles and practices and of any new methods, which promote, or give assurance of promoting, social health; to advocate the highest standards of private and public morality; to suppress commercialized vice; to organize the defense of the community by every available means, educational, sanitary, or legislative, against the diseases of vice; to conduct on request inquiries into the present condition of prostitution and the venereal diseases in American towns and cities; and to secure mutual acquaintance and sympathy and coöperation among the local societies for these or similar purposes.

Membership: Members of this Association shall be either individuals or societies. Individual members and their dues are grouped as follows: **Founders,** $1,000 a year for three years or more; **Patrons,** $500 a year for a year or more; **Benefactors,** $250 a year for a year or more; **Life members,** $100 a year for a year or more; **Sustaining members,** those who give $10 a year during their membership; **Members,** those who give $5 a year during their membership.

Any society organized for or carrying out in whole or in part the general purposes specified in the constitution may be elected to membership in this Association upon payment of annual dues of not less than $10, but shall preserve its autonomy and independence as a local organization.

MSH 21168

END OF
TITLE